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Consecration of the new Iron Church of St. Peter's, Laragh¹.

Our readers will no doubt recollect an appeal being made through our columns last year for funds to erect an iron church at Laragh in the parish of Crossduff, diocese of Clogher. At first the idea was to build a simple iron church of the ordinary type, but several things combined to cause those interested to enlarge their ideas. First, the public responded very generously to the appeal and secondly a site which may be called unique for picturesqueness was available and thirdly the Dean and Chapter of Armagh Cathedral very generously assisted by a very valuable gift of most beautifully carved fleurs-de-lis tops for some of the seat ends, two brass book stands and a quantity of oak moulding; and all of us were agreed that God's house should be exceedingly magnificent and that an ornate building was more conducive to devotion and proper worship of Almighty God. They set to with a will, prompted by the most laudable desire and their efforts have been so blessed that they now possess a most beautiful and unique structure, the admiration of everybody, as well as making the most of the situation as in the external and internal effect produced.

The public road here passes through a valley, which might also be called a glen, the sloping hills on both sides being wooded. Immediately outside the hedge, which forms the road fence is a rivulet, which is at once the property and the townland boundary. At one point a rock, which rises abruptly some ten or twelve feet, causes the river to deviate from the straight course, returning again to the road, thus enclosing between the river and the road, about one rood of ground which is the site of the church and the churchyard. As you approach from either side and round a bend in the road, the little church perched upon this high rock, bursts upon the view amid the trees which surround it, the picturesqueness of the whole being largely increased by the bright red of the roof resembling tiles. Evergreens and flowering shrubs have been planted in the churchyard, which is tastefully laid out with walks, and natural and artificial terraces of steps following the irregularity of the ground.

The church is approached from the road by three terraces of steps in concrete with rough natural limestone copings amid which are peeping out ferns and various evergreens have been planted which add greatly to the effect. The church itself is cruciform, the clergymens' and choir's vestries forming the north and south transepts, but internally only the nave and sanctuary are seen. The entrance is in the tower in the northwest corner. This tower with the spire is some 35 feet high, and is of fanciful design, broken by rooflets covered with fancy tiles in zinc, the red colour producing a bright effect. The square form at the base becomes at the different stages octagonal to agree with the octagonal spire, which tapers up gracefully and not too suddenly, and which is surmounted by the usual weathervane adopted in churches dedicated to St. Peter, a cock calling to repentance. The ironwork rests on a masonry plinth two foot high with a chamfered edge, which is finished in cement giving the effect of a cut stone base. The rock appears on every side cropping up here and there most fancifully, the level being brought up by stone masonry built with a batter of one inch

¹ Thursday week ago.

to the foot and jointed in cement, giving to the whole a massive and most solid effect. At the south side the rock is made bare the whole length of the nave, and stands fully ten feet over the walk which runs at its base between it and the river. A terrace-walk extends around the tower, and north side of nave to the choir-vestry door. The roof, which is fairly swift, though scarcely enough, is surmounted by a beautiful cresting in cast iron which, with the eaves and spouting is painted a chocolate-brown, contrasting well with the roof and walls which latter are stone colour. Handsome old Irish crosses as finials rise from the point of each gable, but here a mistake was made by having them quite too small. The clergyman of this parish is to be congratulated being neither afraid nor ashamed of this, the emblem of our salvation which our Roman Catholic neighbours are too frequently allowed to enjoy alone, and which from ignorance is frequently looked upon by Protestants as a badge of Roman Catholicism. When will our clergy set to in earnest to break down this wall of ignorant superstition, we might say, and instruct their people aright?

Before we enter this sacred building, we may remark, the tower contains a bell, the gift of a gentleman and good Churchman in Armagh. As we enter the church the first thing that attracts our attention is the font, a neat one in Caen stone, and although there is no regular baptistry, it at least occupies the proper position, near to the entrance door. The nave is 25 ft. 6 ins. by 12 ft. internal dimensions with open roof carried by pitch pine principals, which terminates in neat corbels; the sheeting is all deal, v-grooved and tongued, the contrast in the colours being agreeable. The chancel is 12 ft. wide and is entered by two steps in concrete, from which rises a bold Gothic arch in pitch pine, formed of a cluster of shafts with base and capital in keeping, the arch being the whole width of the chancel, which it displays to great advantage. The chancel roof is hexagonal, marked off in panels by rich mouldings in pitch-pine, which are sheeted diagonally in deal, with devices in pitch-pine alternating in each, the whole producing a most striking and rich effect. The East window,-- a memorial one -- is a three lancet, surmounted by three quartrefoils, which are the dove, the Agnus Dei, and the pelican; and a trefoil with the bust of St. Peter, the patron saint of the church, most appropriately chosen. A medallion is in each lancet with the Vine, Passion-flower, Lily-of-the-Valley and Rose of Sharon—the whole grounded in fleurs-de-lis with inscription at the base. This, with the west window, which is of plain cathedral glass, with an oval in each A and O in the two outer lancets and I.H.S. in the centre, all very brilliantly coloured are from the atelier of **Duff Hogarth's Studio**. All the windows are filled with cathedral glass with ruby borderings. The sanctuary which extends some six feet from the east gable is of course the choice spot of the building. It is approached by two steps the bottom one in concrete, finished in pure white emblematic of the innocence of our first parents before the Fall; the second one in the chancel floor in broken mosaic tiling in colours emblematic of the Fall; and finally the altar pace 4 inches high in deep red emblematic of the Blood of Atonement. The altar rail is finished in oak, with clusters of brass and bronze pilasters, carrying a massive top rail with broad slab of oak, quite flat and looks very handsome. It is the gift of Mrs Fausset of Edenderry, who took a lively interest in the little church, procuring subscriptions, and generously subscribing herself. She also provides specially, the altar cloth, which is neat and plain, crimson, with yellow silk

fringe and with the sacred monogram at either end. An exceedingly handsome wrought iron gate, made by a local blacksmith in the neighbouring town of Carrickmacross, completes the altar rail. The altar is a table panelled on three sides by oak, and in the centre of each of the front panels are the sacred monograms, carved in white wood, which shows to advantage on the dark oak. The harmonium is enclosed from the choir vestry and is thus immediately at the rear of the cantori side. Until an organ can be provided this little chamber is sufficiently large to accommodate the female singers as well as the organist. The open seats in the nave are of pitch pine—those in the choir of oak—the ends of which terminate in the beautiful fleurs-de-lis carving before referred to, which are a distinct and striking feature in the church. There is but room for one seat, with book rest on, in the side of the chancel, for the choir and officiating clergyman, but this will of course suffice as of course the members are few. An oak lectern of neat and chaste design is provided, and all that is now required to complete as handsome as is in the diocese, or indeed in any other diocese, apart from our cathedrals, is a pulpit, lamps, vestry furniture, and a gate at the road, which no doubt the perseverance of the rector will provide soon through the liberality of his many friends.

The entire building is lined throughout with felt, equalizing the temperature. We may here remark that the iron work was done by Messrs. Musgraves² of Belfast, which is of alone a guarantee of its thoroughness. All the remainder is the work of local men, and especially of one man who did all the particular parts, and who may feel justly proud of his work. This will account for the time that was occupied with the building. The consecration took place on Thursday week by the Right Rev. The Lord Bishop of the diocese attended by his chaplain the Ven. The Archdeacon, and assisted by the following clergy:

The Right Rev Canon Ovenden B.D. Precentor and Rector of Enniskillen; The Rev J.B. Frith M.A.; The Rev. Peter Wilson D.D. Rector of Leck; The Rev. R.B.A. Young, M.A., Rector of Ballybay; The Rev. B. Moffet, M.A., Rector of Carrickmacross; The Rev. Hugh Gelston, M.A., Rector of Enniskeen; The Rev, J.M. Strickland, M.A., Rector of Rockcorry; The Rev. A. Montgomery, B.A. Rector of Aughnamullen; The Rev T. W. Clinton, B.A. Curate of Castleblayney; The Rev. T. J. Charlton, Rector of the parish;

Unfortunately the weather was not propitious, but nevertheless this church was filled. The service was choral throughout, the Rev. Canon Ovenden and the incumbent officiating. The first lesson was read by the Rev. J.B. Frith, M.A. and the second by the Rev P. Wilson, D.D., who had formerly been incumbent in the parish. The anthem was that most beautiful and appropriate one by Dr. Boyce, Solomon's dedication anthem "I have surely built thee an house" from 1 Kings viii, 13 in which Canon Ovenden assisted by taking the beautiful tenor solo, which he rendered with feeling effect. The hymns were 421 and 10. The offertory sentences were by A. Gaul of St. Augustine's, Birmingham and considering the very rural nature of the parish, and the sparse church population, all went smoothly and effectively. The Bishop preached an

2 . For some information relating to Musgraves see
http://www.hevac-heritage.org/victorian_engineers/musgrave's/musgrave's.htm

appropriate sermon, after which Holy Communion was administered, the greater portion of the congregation remaining. The churchyard was then consecrated. Now that such a strikingly beautiful little church has been provided, it is to be hoped that parishioners will show their appreciation of it, by regular attendance at the services and the sacraments. Certainly they have every encouragement thereto, and they are under deep obligation to their Rector, who has been indefatigable, and the various subscribers, including the Trustees of the Beresford Fund, to the S.P.C.K., and also one anonymous donor of £150 whose name has never transpired, but who is known to him who will one day reward openly.

Glossary of words and terms

Parish of Crossduff : Crossduff or 'Blackcross' is the Anglican Parish which equates to the Roman Catholic Parish of Aughnamullen East.

Fleurs-de-lis : Three Petal Stylised Flower Symbol = Holy Trinity.

Rood of ground : Equals one quarter acre of ground.

Batter : a wall constructed purposefully with a gently sloping face.

Agnus Dei : Latin = The Lamb of God

A,O : Greek letters Alpha (A) and Omega (O) meaning that 'God is Eternal'.

I.H.S. : Latin = In Hoc Signo *Vinces* meaning 'Salvation through Christ'.

John Duff of Hogarth's Studio : Stained Glass artist, London.

Pace : Latin (passus) = a small step or raised platform.

Edenderry : A village of County Tyrone in the Diocese of Clogher.

Sacred Monograms : Religious Codes – A, O and I.H.S. and XP (Christ).

Musgraves of Belfast : Musgrave Brothers Ltd, Engineering Ironworks.

Enniskeen : Inniskeen Parish, County Monaghan.

Mr. A. Gaul : Alfred Gaul, Choirmaster of St. Augustine's, Birmingham, England.

S.P.C.K. : The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.